

The Sixty-second Season of
THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2493d Concert

DMITRY SITKOVETSKY, *violinist*
BELLA DAVIDOVICH, *pianist*

Sunday Evening, 18 April 2004
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano in D Major
(1770–1827) Op. 12, No. 1 (1797)

Allegro con brio
Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto
Rondo: Allegro

Edvard Grieg Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano in C Minor
(1843–1907) Op. 45 (1886–1887)

Allegro molto ed appassionato
Espressivo alla romanza
Allegro animato

Intermission

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Sonata for Violin and Piano in F Major
(1756–1791) K. 377 (1781)

Allegro
Tema con variazioni: Andante
Tempo di minuetto

Maurice Ravel Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major
(1875–1937) (1927)

Allegretto
Blues: Moderato
Perpetuum mobile: Allegro

The Musicians

Dmitry Sitkovetsky has built a flourishing career as both a violinist and a conductor. He has appeared as a soloist with the world's finest orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, London Symphony, Philharmonia, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York Philharmonic, and Cleveland orchestras. World-renowned festivals at which he has performed include the Salzburg, Lucerne, Edinburgh, Ravinia, and Mostly Mozart festivals. Sitkovetsky has recorded all the major violin concertos and has received special acclaim for his recordings of concertos by Bartok, Shostakovich, and Prokofiev. With the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, he has recorded concertos of Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Sibelius, and Tchaikovsky.

Sitkovetsky is the principal conductor and artistic advisor of the Ulster Orchestra, with which he has toured the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and Hong Kong. He is also the founding director of the New European Strings (NES) Chamber Orchestra, an ensemble consisting of distinguished string players from both the eastern and western hemispheres. Among the critically acclaimed projects undertaken by the NES Chamber Orchestra is the recording of a transcription by Sitkovetsky of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Sitkovetsky has been guest conductor of the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, the BBC Philharmonic, the Rundfunk Orchestras of Leipzig and Hannover, the Academia di Santa Caecilia, and the Los Angeles and Saint Paul Chamber orchestras, among many others.

The list of orchestras with which **Bella Davidovich** has appeared as concerto soloist over the years is synonymous with the list of the world's greatest ensembles. Likewise, the list of conductors with whom she has collaborated resembles a who's who of renowned musicians. Eugene Ormandy, Andrew Davis, Herbert Blomstedt, Klaus Tenstedt, Riccardo Muti, Leonard Slatkin, Christoph Eschenbach, Mstislav Rostropovich, Michael Tilson Thomas, Kirill Kondrashin, and Kurt Masur make up only the first portion of the long list. Davidovich is a

favorite and frequent performer at such prestigious music festivals as La Roc d'Antherron, Schleswig-Holstein, Piano Festival Ruhr, and Verbier, and she has served on the juries at the world-renowned Queen Elisabeth of Belgium and Chopin International Competitions.

In 1988 Bella Davidovich was the first expatriate musician to receive an official invitation from the Soviet government to return to her native land for concerts, all of which were sold out. She was born to a family of musicians in Baku, and her extraordinary talent was already apparent by the time she was six years old. She entered the Moscow Conservatory at age eighteen. One of two first-prize winners of the 1949 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, she was soon thereafter named a "Deserving Artist of the Soviet Union." She was one of very few women appointed to professorships at the Moscow Conservatory. In spite of her success in the Soviet Union, she decided to emigrate to the United States in 1978. Her October 1979 debut at Carnegie Hall drew headlines and rave reviews and was the beginning of an equally illustrious career in the West. She was appointed to the faculty of the Juilliard School of Music in 1985 and continues to teach there. Bella Davidovich's recordings can be heard on the Orfeo, Novalis, Delos, Guttingi, and Supraphon labels.

Program Notes

Although Beethoven's first violin sonata (*Op. 12, No. 1*) does not display the sophistication of his later works for this genre, it is far from elementary, presenting an effectively bright and sunny musical picture. The first movement begins with a unison passage for both instruments, from which the violin breaks away to introduce the first theme. Beethoven establishes an equitable and intriguing dialogue between the violin and the piano that is enhanced by the transformation of the material to the minor mode in the development section. The second movement (*Andante con moto*) consists of a theme and variations in which the two-part nature of the theme leads to two-part variations, each offering a separate treatment for each half of the theme. The one exception is the third variation, which is a single unit in minor mode.

Beethoven's sense of humor manifests itself in the third and final movement, where the beat occasionally shifts away from the natural accents of the 6/8 meter and the tonality abruptly changes from D major to F major.

All the works Edvard Grieg composed after 1864 reflect his determination to make use in his music of either folk melodies of his native Norway, or of rhythms and turns of melody that are typical of that tradition. In the case of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano in C Minor*, Grieg turns to the *halling*, a folk dance in duple meter, in the second movement. The movement begins with a charming, simple melody, rendered first by the piano and then by the violin, after which the contrasting section imitates the folk dance. The first and final movements are broadly dramatic and animated, and the vigor of the finale is enhanced by liberal use of offbeat rhythms.

Mozart was unhappy as chapel concertmaster to Archbishop Colloredo of Salzburg almost from the day he received the position in 1773. A series of conflicts with his employer led to Mozart's dismissal in 1781, and the *Sonata for Violin and Piano in F Major*, written that same year, seems initially to reflect the composer's frustrated mental state. The first movement blusters with choppy musical phrases that appear to communicate an air of indifference. The second movement features a set of six variations based on a theme in the murky key of D minor, but a reprieve appears with variation five as it switches to the major mode, and with variation six, which is a lilting *siciliana*. The joviality and vivaciousness of the final rondo (*Tempo di minuetto*) completely dispense any doubts that may have been planted by the sonata's initial overcast mood.

Ravel's *Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major* is the only work in this genre for which he sought publication. (His only other attempt, a single-movement sonata written in 1897 when he was a student at the Paris Conservatory, was forgotten until it was unearthed and published in 1975 by Editions Salabert.) Carefully fashioned to show off the violin and the piano equally, the *G Major Sonata* begins with a graceful, relaxed movement (*Allegretto*) that is classical in form but romantic in its sensual melodic lines. The second subject reveals more of Ravel's

distinct personality as a composer, as diminished octaves are added to the harmonic palette and the violin is accompanied by unadorned parallel fifths. In the second movement, suggestively titled *Blues*, Ravel imitates the style of a jazz saxophonist in the slithering melody he assigns to the violin and adds bitonality to the harmonic palette in the piano accompaniment. Ravel's concept of perpetual motion, as presented in the final movement, places great demands on the violinist, who is obliged to produce 179 consecutive measures of twelve sixteenth notes each, without interruption. The premiere performance of this sonata featured Ravel at the piano and the renowned Romanian violinist-composer, Georges Enesco, on the violin.

Program notes by Stephen Ackert

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.